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ABSTRACT

The Family Day Care Check-In Program is designed to offer working parents convenient, affordable after school care for their children aged 10 to 14. It provides children with flexible supervision by caring, trained adults and gives them opportunities to grow into responsible, independent teens by planning and participating in activities on their own. The Check-In Program is designed to be sponsored and administered by an existing community group, such as a child care center, children's club, or service organization. The sponsoring agency recruits, hires, and trains the program's family day care providers. The providers care for and supervise children, plan projects, and offer friendship, support, and counsel. The two booklets which make up this document introduce the program, explain how to implement and administer it, and suggest a training course for providers. The first booklet, an overview, describes the two Fairfax County, Virginia community service organizations which piloted the program and highlights the program's positive features. The second booklet describes how the program works and includes guidelines for staffing the program and for resolving licensing, zoning, and liability issues as well as for publicity, training, and evaluation. (DST)

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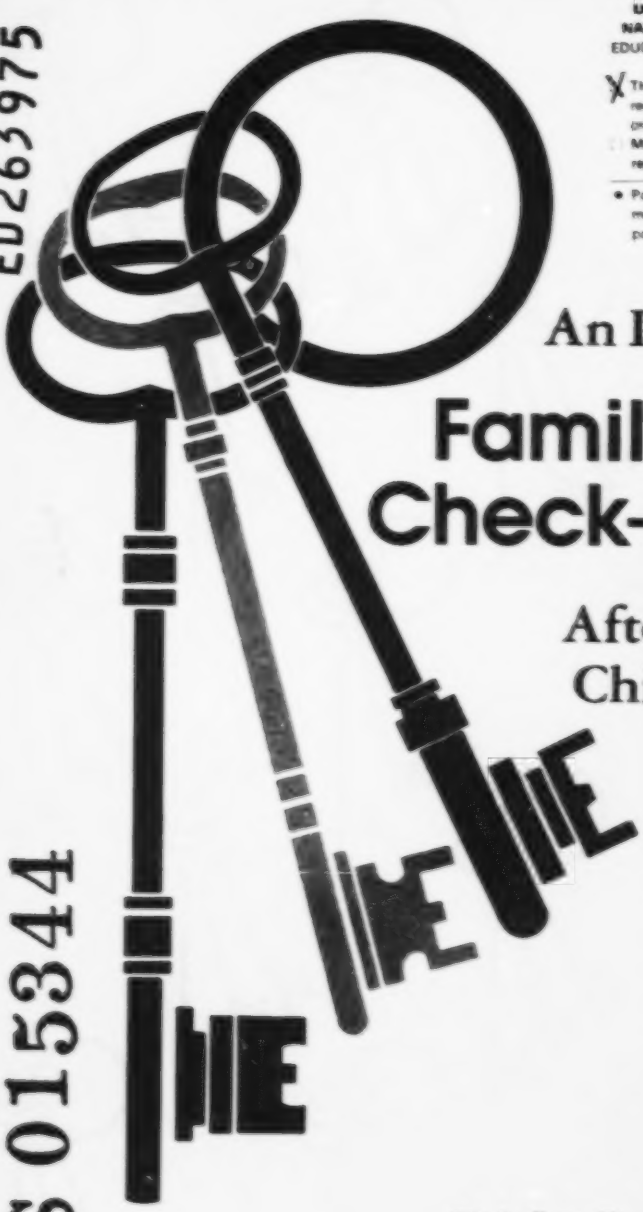

An Introduction to the

Family Day Care Check-In Program

After-School Care for Children Aged 10-14

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Prepared by the
Fairfax County Office for Children
Fairfax, Virginia

NOTICE

Anyone considering the adoption of this program or any similar activity should be aware that these materials, including sample contracts and forms, are not intended to take the place of retaining a lawyer for legal advice. These materials are intended to aid a lawyer in understanding and identifying liability concerns and to help a lay person understand the basic liability and organizational issues involved. Each states' law may differ. Before engaging in any new or novel undertaking such as this one, it is strongly urged that legal counsel be sought.

An Introduction To The

Family Day Care Check-In Program

After-School Care for Children Aged 10-14

The Fairfax County Office for Children
11212 Waples Mill Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
703-691-3175

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Fairfax County Office for Children has been working to provide services for children and their families for 10 years. We have always sought to develop services and programs that meet the changing needs of our community.

In recent years we have seen a growing number of working mothers and latchkey kids in Fairfax, matching the growth across the country. We know that when children reach preadolescence they are often restless in traditional child care settings, and yet many of them are not ready for full independence.

We were very pleased, therefore, to receive funding from the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a model for a Family Day Care Check-in Program, providing flexible care for children ages 10-14. Two groups in Fairfax County, the Reston Children's Center and the Potomac Area Council of Camp Fire, piloted the program for a year, and each continues to operate the program today. Through our combined experience we have worked out the guidelines to implement and operate a Check-in Program.

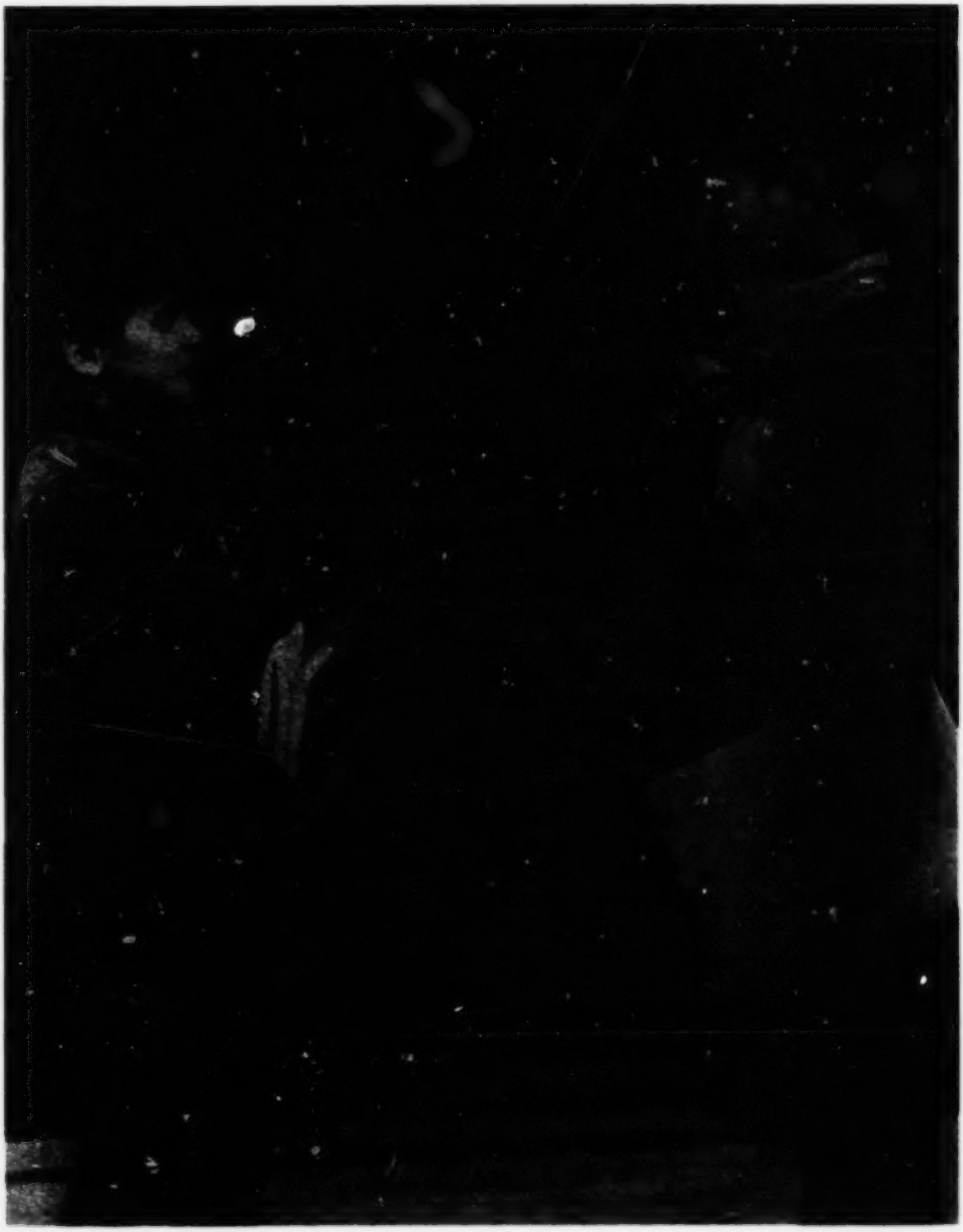
Many talented and committed people contributed to the Check-In Program's success. Judy McKnight and Roberta Newman developed the original proposal, based on ideas generated by Office for Children staff. Judy McKnight supervised all aspects of the project, from writing the proposal through designing and testing the model, to the development of dissemination materials. Betsy Shelsby, the project director, worked with the sponsoring agencies on a day to day basis, providing them with technical support and assistance.

Maude Katzenbach and Nancy Goodell of the Potomac Area Campfire Council and Madeline Fried and Donna Kesler of the Reston Children's Center provided the leadership which allowed a need and a plan to become a reality - a child care service.

But my greatest appreciation is to the enthusiastic and energetic family day care providers in Reston and Springfield. Every day after school they gave their time, commitment, and good judgment and friendship to the young adolescents in their communities.

We hope that the information in these booklets will be useful to groups concerned with improving the quality of care for preadolescents throughout the country, and we welcome any inquiries about the program.

Judith Rosen
Director, Office for Children



We call them "latchkey kids," the more than seven million children in the United States left on their own before and after school, and during holidays and vacations. They can be as young as five or six, but more often they are preadolescent 10-14 year olds for whom traditional day care programs are inappropriate. Children this age often feel restricted at a day care center, too old to be there. They tend to "vote with their feet"—they refuse to go. Instead, many preadolescents spend their afternoons alone in locked houses, in shopping malls or on the street without much purpose, because their parents are unable to find a day care alternative.

Most of these children's parents would like to see them greeted by a responsible adult to ask about their day, hear their problems, and share in their good times. And many of the children themselves would like an adult to talk to, while having the freedom to be in their own homes, take part in school activities, or play with neighborhood friends.

In 1982, the Department of Health and Human Services awarded a grant to the Fairfax County, Virginia, Office for Children (OFC) to design and test a program offering convenient, affordable, appropriate care to these children and their parents. The result was the Family Day Care Check-In Program, an after school program of care for children ages 10-14, designed to be sponsored and administered by an already existing community group such as a day care center, children's club, or service organization. This sponsoring agency places children with trained family day care providers who live in their neighborhoods, and who supervise children in the providers' homes at times designated by their parents. Children are also able to plan with their parents times when they can play with friends, enjoy school and community activities, or be alone in their own homes.

The Family Day Care Check-In Program provides preadolescents with flexible supervision by caring, trained adults, and at the same time gives them the opportunity to grow more independent and responsible by planning and participating in activities on their own. Two non-profit community service groups, the Reston Children's Center and the Potomac Area Council of Camp Fire, successfully piloted the program in Virginia. The OFC developed the guidelines, policies, and procedures to begin and operate the program. These guidelines are described in two booklets which introduce the program, explain how to implement and administer it, and suggest a training course for providers.

We hope the guidelines described in these booklets will help other groups committed to improving care for preadolescents, and serve as a model for Family Day Care Check-In Programs throughout the country.

The Fairfax County Office for Children

FAMILY DAY CARE CHECK-IN PROGRAMS THAT WORK: THE RESTON CHILDREN'S CENTER

The Reston Children's Center is a private, non-profit, parent-owned cooperative child care organization. Parents participate for several hours a week in landscaping, maintenance, fund-raising, and classroom enrichment projects. Fifty teachers, assistants, and providers offer center and homebased day care in part and full-time programs for about 300 children aged 3 months to 14 years. Since 1965, the Center has served the planned community of Reston, Virginia, with a population of 40,000. Its goals are to meet the developmental needs of children and to provide support for their families.

The "Senior Satellite Program" now serves Reston's preadolescents as one of the programs the Center offers. It is part of a larger satellite program enrolling children of working parents in family day care homes starting at age 5. As children become older, they can make a smooth transition into more flexible Check-in care within the program. Reston's Check-In Program Coordinator is also the Assistant Director of the entire Center. She arranges field trips for all the satellite program children to places as varied as the U.S. Navy Museum and a nearby bowling alley. During the summer, the Center offers preadolescents the opportunity to work with pre-school children in a counselors-in-training program. Because the Center serves children of many ages, it has the opportunity to coordinate programs to enrich the experience of all its children.

IT'S THREE O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON– DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR KIDS ARE?

The summer before he entered sixth grade, eleven year old David moved from Michigan to Virginia. When school began, he and his younger brother spent mornings and afternoons in the home of a family day care provider. His brother enjoyed this, but David felt he had no one his own age to play with, and he did not like spending all his time at the day care home. After several weeks, he convinced his mother to let him stay alone in his own home after school.

In Michigan, David had often cared for himself and his brother, but he had several friends in the neighborhood, an aunt living three blocks away, and a grandmother nearby. In Virginia, David had only a few friends, and his mother knew only one neighbor. At home, he was lonely and apprehensive. David's mother knew she needed an alternative to both full-time and latchkey care.

Unlike David, twelve year old Alice had lived in Virginia for eleven years. After her seventh grade classes, she usually joined her friends at a local shopping center. She went home only when there was nothing else to do, didn't finish her homework or chores, and was often bored and unhappy. When she began missing school and turning in incomplete work, her mother knew that something had to be done. Yet Alice felt she was too old for a traditional day care program. Alice's mother needed an alternative to both full-time and latchkey care.

Both David and Alice's mothers faced the problem of a growing number of parents who would like to have convenient, appropriate, affordable care for their preadolescent children. These parents do not feel completely comfortable that their children are home alone, or "hanging out" with friends. As Alice's mother said, "We all need someone to turn to and depend on. I used to get real restless from 3:00 on. Alice would call, but I felt stranded because I was so far away."

Many of these parents also realize that their children will not be happy in a traditional day care setting, requiring them to stay in a center or family day care home for all the after-school hours. In addition, for low and moderate income parents, the cost of traditional before and after-school care can be a financial burden.

Both David and Alice's mother did find an alternative, the Family Day Care Check-In Program. Now these children stop by their day care provider Mrs. Gordon's house every day after school, where they join two other children for a snack and a chat. They may stay and do homework, crafts projects Mrs. Gordon has planned, or just talk and play games.

Sometimes Mrs. Gordon takes them all swimming, roller skating, or to a playground. With written permission from their parents they may go to their own homes, attend activities like soccer practice or music lessons, or play with other friends. Then they call Mrs. Gordon to let her know where they are, and she calls back to confirm this. They are free to participate in the outside activities they and their parents agree on.

FAMILY DAY CARE CHECK-IN PROGRAMS THAT WORK: THE POTOMAC CAMP FIRE COUNCIL

Camp Fire Council, founded in 1910, is a non-profit organization involving half a million children and adults in 35,000 communities throughout the United States. Its programs are as varied as the needs and energies of the communities it serves. They include a Buddy Program which pairs handicapped and nonhandicapped children for a year's activities, a Career Training Program for teenagers, and a "Zoo Crew" employing young teens as volunteers. Camp Fire's goals are to help young people realize their potential through informal educational opportunities, and to improve the conditions in society which affect them.

The Potomac Council's KIDS Check-in Program now serves preadolescents in Springfield, Virginia. This Council decided to start the KIDS Program in response to the problems of a growing number of working mothers in their community who were concerned about appropriate supervision for their children. Fourteen providers now care for children in the KIDS Program. Camp Fire's KIDS Coordinator draws on the greater resources of the Camp Fire Council to bring a variety of Camp Fire programs into the providers' homes. She visits once a month with materials for art projects and ideas for games and activities, including a cook book and a memory book of holiday experiences which each home is recording. She also arranges programs for Check-in children at the Camp Fire center, which have included French and Vietnamese cooking lessons and karate demonstrations. Thus Camp Fire uses its experience in planning exciting, instructive activities to enrich its program for Check-in children.

With the Check-in Program, each child has an individual plan to fit his own needs, interests, and routines. Nine year old Jennifer spends all her after school hours at Mrs. Gordon's house, for example, while David might check in for a snack, leave to join friends at a neighborhood playground, then return to finish homework at Mrs. Gordon's house. Alice started out spending all her time at Mrs. Gordon's. Now she can go straight to her own home twice a week, and call to let Mrs. Gordon know she is there. Sometimes she stays at the provider's house because she wants to. She likes the crafts projects and the other kids.

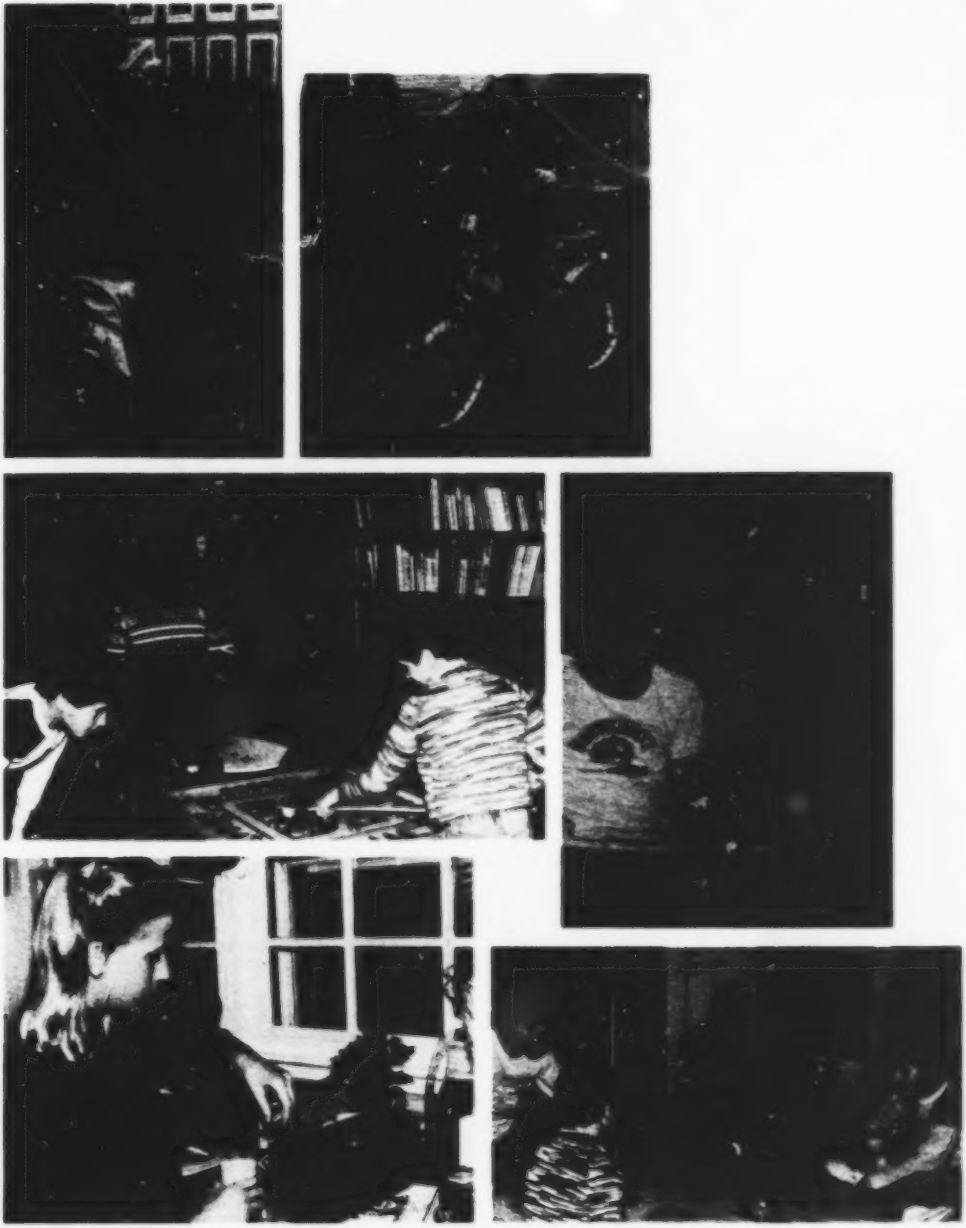
The Lady Down The Street

The Family Day Care Check-In Program gives children like David and Alice the balance between independence and adult support and supervision that many preadolescents need. Although in some ways they are old enough to take care of themselves, left on their own for up to twenty hours a week, they can feel isolated, lonely, bored, or even fearful. A 3:30 phone call to parents who might be ten or twenty miles away is not enough. They need face to face access to responsible adults who are available to talk, to listen, to comfort, and to advise.

Children on their own after school are, in fact, often attracted to a neighbor who is home, the "lady down the street." Sometimes she is the mother of a friend, sometimes a mother at home with pre-schoolers, sometimes just a sympathetic person who does no more than greet children warmly and ask about their wellbeing. A Check-In Program provider like Mrs. Gordon is the lady down the street, someone in the neighborhood who is there for children whenever they need her.

Mrs. Gordon is more than a provider—she is a counselor, a confidante, a friend. "The children feel comfortable with me," she says. "They talk freely about the things that are happening that are immediate—that would get lost if the children had to wait until 6:00 or 7:00 when their parents get home."

Mrs. Gordon, like all providers, is also trained by the sponsoring agency in a 26 hour course including preadolescent development, discipline, health care, nutrition, and planning recreational activities.



Helping Kids To Grow

The Family Day Care Check-In Program costs parents somewhat less than most traditional day care programs. In addition, the Check-In Program is flexible enough so that parents who need to cut down expenses can contract hours on a daily basis, not paying for days when they decide their children will receive no care.

In return for this cost, the Check-In Program does more than fill children's needs for companionship, entertainment, and structure—it helps them to grow, develop their talents and abilities. It gets them out of a locked house, and into a world of school and community activities, hobbies, and play. It helps them to develop competence and responsibility by planning their own days and pursuing their special interests. It encourages them to share with their parents their feelings about what they want and need, and lets them know that they are able to assume more independence or ask for more support as they require.

The Family Day Care Check-In Program provides just the right amount of guidance for preadolescents who are almost—but not quite—ready to go it alone for several hours a day.

A Question Of Responsibility...

While the need for a flexible preadolescent day care program is clear, in the past the question of responsibility has been a major obstacle in developing such a program. Who would be responsible, and legally accountable, for children when they were not in centers or day care homes, but travelling to and from activities or on their own?

The resolution of this issue lies in the clear definition of the responsibilities of all program participants. A special three-way contract between parents, providers, and the sponsoring agency allows the Check-In Program to define not only the responsibilities of the sponsoring agency and the provider, but also of the parents.

Under the contract, providers are responsible for children when they are in the provider's home. Parents take the responsibility for their children when they leave the provider home to participate in approved activities. Parents decide how much freedom their children will have, schedule activities, arrange transportation if the program is unable to provide it, and make sure their children are attending.

...And One Of Regulation

Moreover, agencies and providers have been concerned with licensing and zoning requirements for care which doesn't quite fit traditional categories. The unique features of a flexible program, based on the special needs of preadolescents, require new interpretations of regulations which apply to day care programs.

In those communities requiring licenses, providers can apply based on the care provided in family day care homes. As with other day care programs parents can give permission for their children to leave the day care home to participate in other activities. Zoning is based on the maximum number of children who will be in the provider's home at any one time on a regular basis. In the pilot programs' experience, providers tend to take not more than five children, a number which does not require special zoning permits in Fairfax County, Virginia.

The Sponsoring Agency Makes It Work

The community agency which sponsors a Family Day Care Check-In Program is in an excellent position to take on the overall responsibility for preadolescents when they are in care. A Check-In Program works well when it is part of a larger organization with financial and administrative resources to begin and support the program. It then becomes one of the many programs the agency offers because it works with children and recognizes and cares about their special needs. It might be part of an existing family day care program which includes younger children, and helps them to make the transition from traditional care to independence. It might be developed along with recreation programs which preadolescents can check out to.

The sponsoring agency is responsible for all aspects of operating the Check-In Program, including hiring and training administrative staff and providers, publicity, enrolling children, and continuing evaluation and supervision. This effort requires a commitment of both time and money. Each pilot program received start-up funds; now they operate with parent fees and additional agency support as one of the many services the group offers to the community.

The sponsoring agency in fact plays a very special role in making the Family Day Care Check-In Program work. Groups like the YM & YWCA, the Camp Fire Council, Scouts, churches, or long established day care centers already have links with the community which needs such services. They are recognized and trusted, with the ability for outreach and publicity efforts. They are often familiar with the requirements of agencies concerned with children's protection, as well as the process of obtaining licenses and zoning permits. They have an existing administrative structure, and experience in hiring and training people to work in various child-related fields.

Most important, the sponsoring agency understands the special needs of children, and the importance of programs which meet these needs at every age.

Accepting The Challenge

We may never go back to a time when most mothers stay at home, ready to greet their children when they come through the door after school. Two thirds of all women with school-age children work or are looking for work. A Congressional Budget Office report expects 75% of these mothers will work by 1990. More and more children will be on their own after school unless they can find flexible and appropriate care.

The Family Day Care Check-In Program offers the supervision many of these children need as they grow from childhood to adolescence. Details on how to implement and administer all aspects of the program are available in a second booklet. It can be obtained by contacting:

The Fairfax County Office for Children
11212 Waples Mill Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Many community groups and organizations already work with and for young people every day. When these groups sponsor programs like the Family Day Care Check-In Program, they are accepting the challenge of providing appropriate care for latchkey children until they are old enough to be safely and happily on their own.

John F. Herrity, Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

J. Hamilton Lambert, County Executive

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for Human Services

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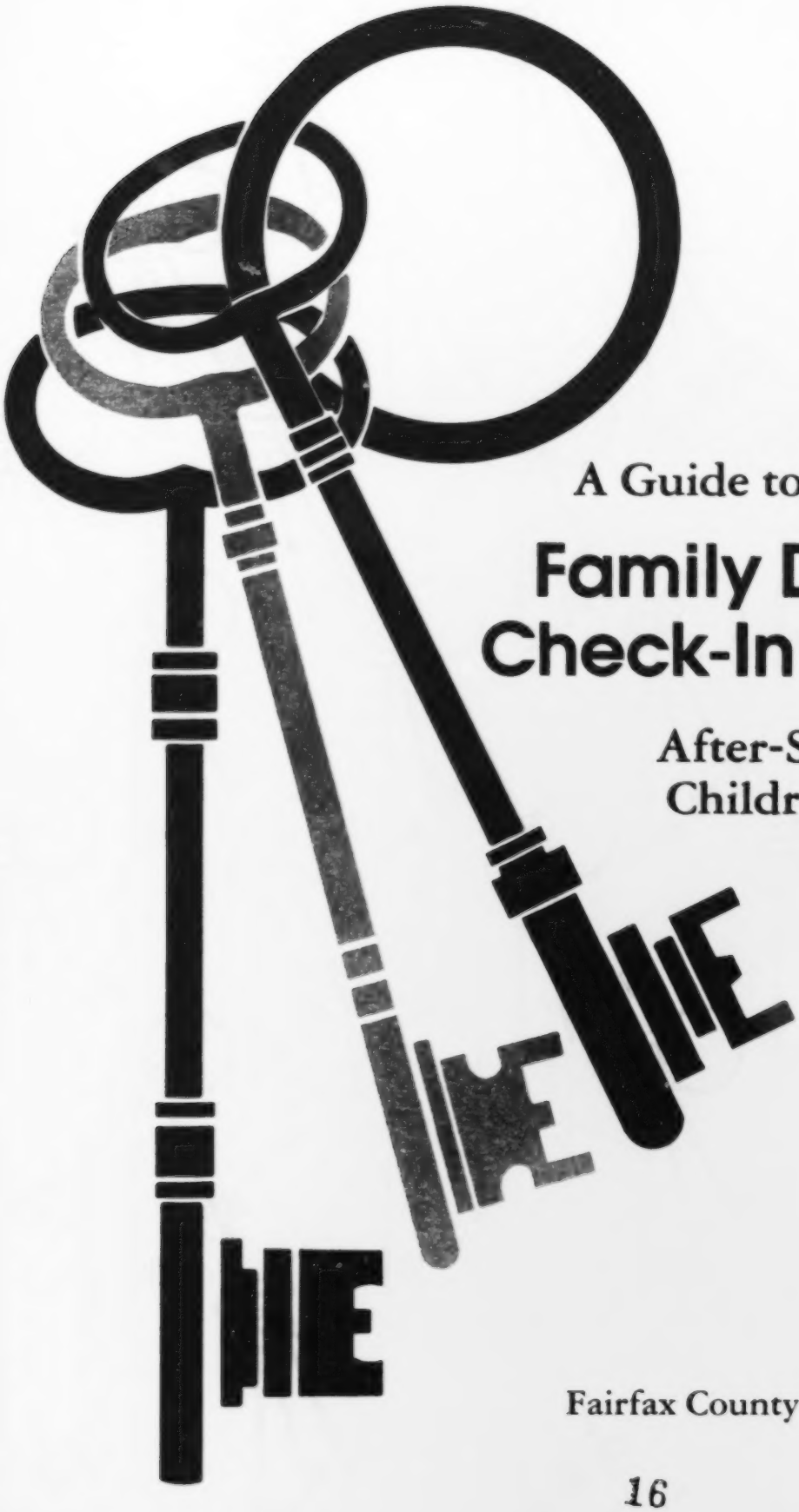

A Guide to Operating the

Family Day Care Check-In Program

After-School Care for Children Aged 10-14

Prepared by the
Fairfax County Office for Children
Fairfax, Virginia

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Many talented and committed people contributed to the Check-In Program's success. Judy McKnight and Roberta Newman developed the original proposal, based on ideas generated by Office for Children staff. Judy McKnight supervised all aspects of the project, from writing the proposal through designing and testing the model, to the development of dissemination materials. Betsy Shelsby, the project director, worked with the sponsoring agencies on a day to day basis, providing them with technical support and assistance.

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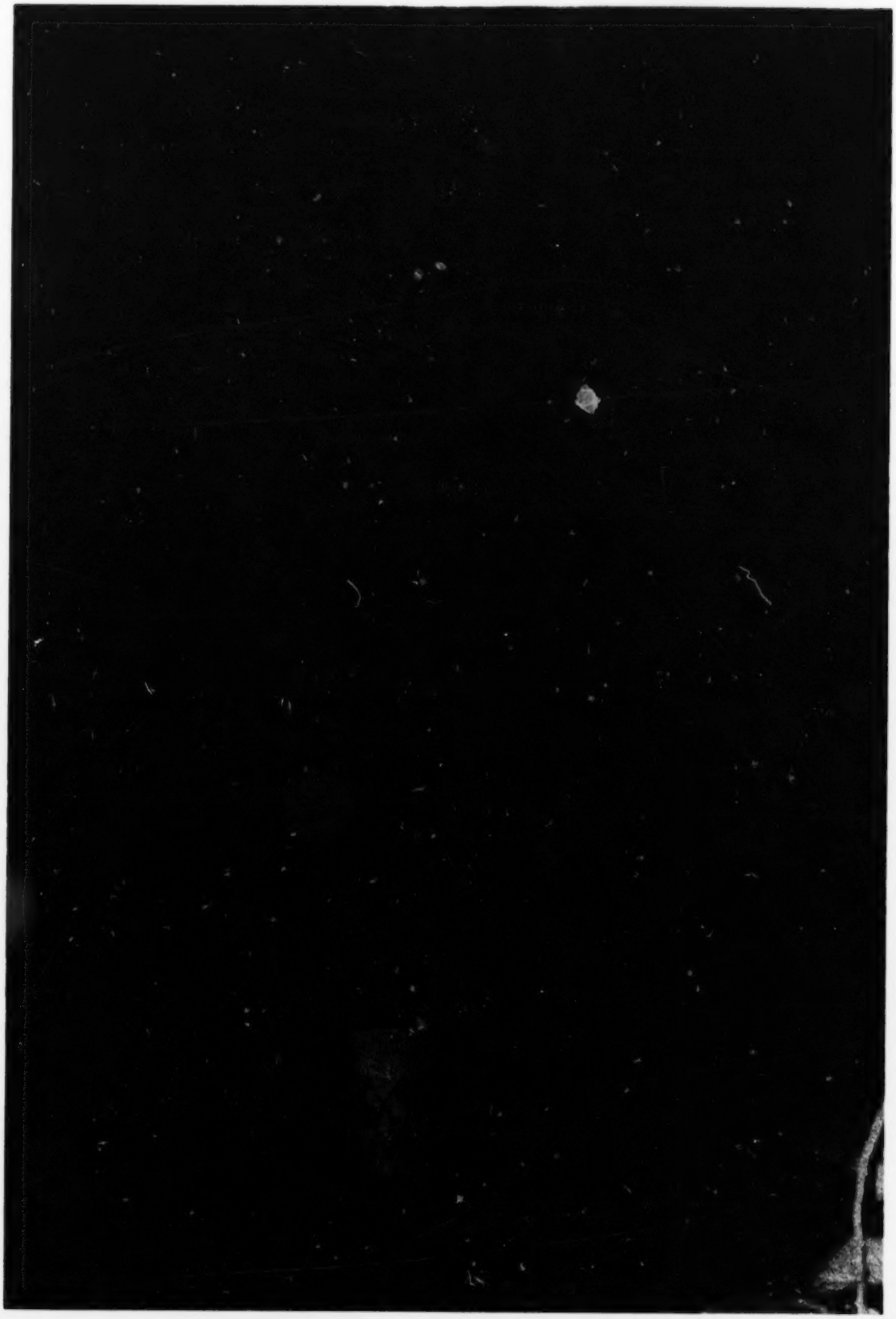

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INTRODUCTION

The Family Day Care Check-in Program is designed to offer working parents convenient, affordable after school care for their preadolescent children, ages 10-14. It provides these children with flexible supervision by caring, trained adults, and at the same time gives them the opportunity to grow into responsible, independent teens by planning and participating in activities on their own. The Check-in Program helps preadolescents to make the transition from traditional child care programs for which they feel too old, to fully independent self care.

The Check-in Program is sponsored and administered by an already existing community group such as a child care center, children's club, or service organization like the YM & YWCA, Camp Fire, or Scouts. This sponsoring agency recruits, hires, and trains the program's family day care providers. In their own homes, providers care for and supervise children, planning projects for them and offering friendship, support, and counsel.

The providers and the sponsoring agency have an ongoing relationship. The agency collects fees from parents and pays providers, supervises and evaluates their care, and helps them to plan programs for the children and their families. Together the agency and providers keep administrative records for each child and build an ongoing relationship with families in the program.

The sponsoring agency also interviews families interested in the program and matches children with providers in their neighborhoods. Providers then supervise children in the provider's home at times designated by their parents. Children are also able to plan with their parents and providers times when they can play with friends, enjoy school and community activities, or be alone in their own homes.

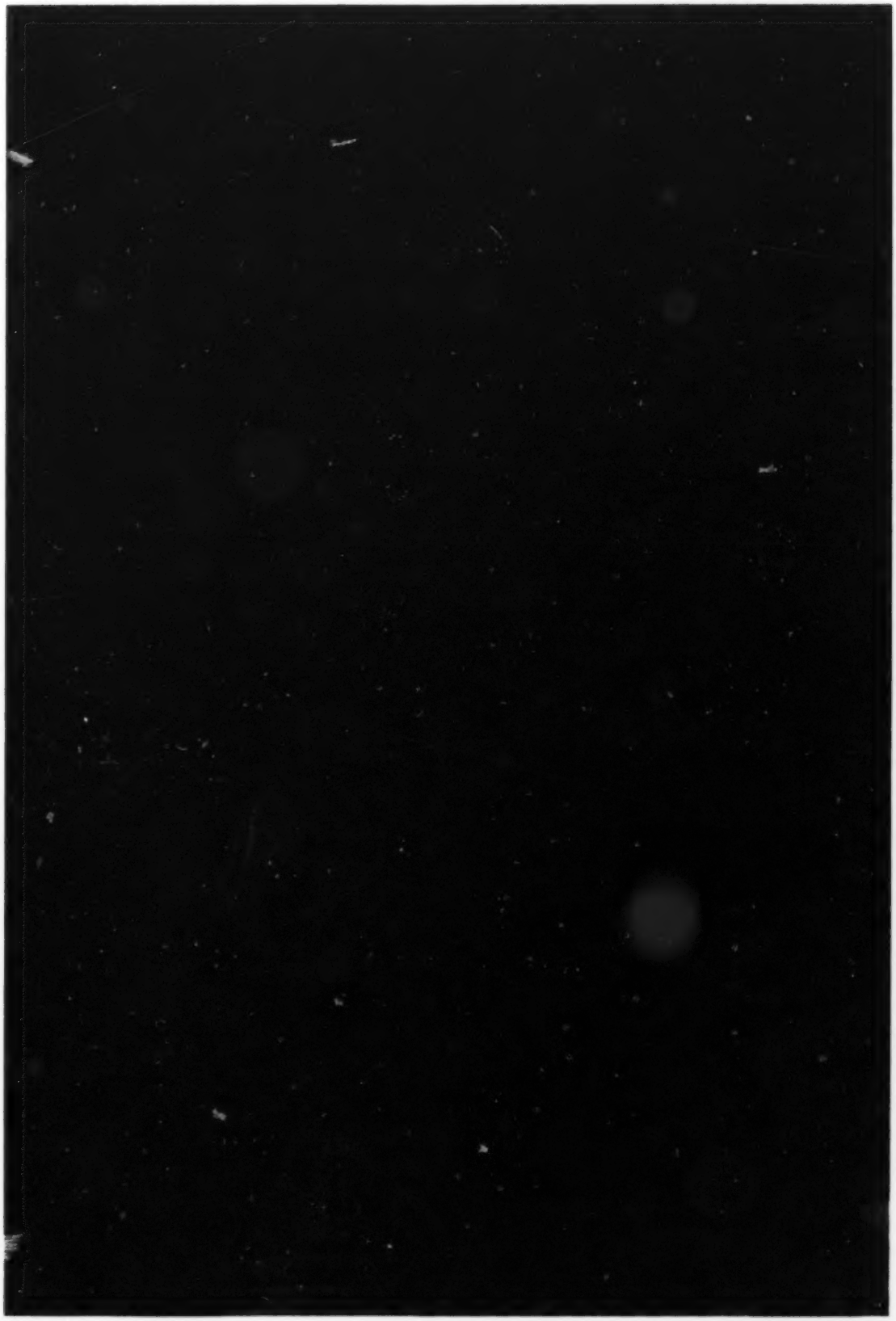
The Fairfax County, Virginia, Office for Children developed the model for a Family Day Care Check-in Program discussed in detail in this booklet. Two community service organizations in Virginia, the Reston Children's Center and the Potomac Area Council of Camp Fire, piloted the program, and each continues to operate one today.

The experience of these three groups is the basis for the information on how to implement and operate a Family Day Care Check-in Program described in this booklet. It begins with a description of how the program actually works, including the responsibilities of all participants defined in a contract between the sponsoring agency, parents, and providers. This booklet also includes guidelines for:

- staffing the program with an administrator and providers
- resolving licensing, zoning, and liability issues
- publicizing the program
- training the providers
- keeping the program going

The sponsoring agency is responsible for all these aspects of the program. Starting and running a Check-in Program requires a full commitment of time and money. An agency should take on this commitment after it has considered the needs of its community, and how the Check-in Program fits in with both its other programs and its goals for community service. It should also become familiar with day care administration and the other child care resources in its community.

When these questions have been answered, the sponsoring agency is ready to use this booklet as a guide which it can adapt to fit the specific requirements of its organization and the community it serves.



HOW THE CHECK-IN PROGRAM WORKS

Meet the Greens: Mr. and Mrs. Green and their eleven year old son Michael. Mr. Green is a salesman who travels frequently, and Mrs. Green works in an accounting firm 25 miles from their home. Michael has been in an after school program at his elementary school for five years and feels he is ready for a change, but none of them likes the idea of his being alone after school. Michael knows he will have to stay locked inside his house, and won't be able to play with his friends, ride his bike, or stop by the neighborhood playground. Mrs. Green worries that he will be lonely and watch too much television.

Then the Greens attend a PTA meeting where a speaker from a local child care center talks about the growing community concern about the problems and needs of unsupervised preadolescents, and a new program they are starting for children 10-14 years old. It's called the Family Day Care Check-in Program, and it sounds like it's just what the Greens are looking for. The next day Mrs. Green calls the child care center to find out more about it.

The Greens are invited to an interview with the Check-in Program Coordinator, Mrs. Marshall. At the interview, they begin by talking about the kind of person Michael is, and what he likes to do. Mrs. Marshall explains that together Michael and his parents will decide how much independence and responsibility he is ready for, and plan his days within the guidelines of the program.

Then Mrs. Marshall explains how the program works. After school Michael will check-in with a family day care provider, a person in the neighborhood whom the center has recruited and trained to offer after school care and supervision. At his provider's home, Michael will have a snack and get a chance to talk about his day. Then he can play in the provider's home, outside in the yard, or in the neighborhood—as far away as he and his parents decide he is allowed to go. He can play with other children who come to the provider's home, do homework, or participate in the crafts projects and games the provider has planned; if his parents allow, he can play at the homes of other children in the neighborhood. Again, if the Greens agree, Michael can stay after school for an activity, or check-out of the provider's home to attend a community activity he enjoys. And he can spend time in his own home for as long and as often as his parents give him permission.

The Greens learn that they will have to plan a weekly activities schedule and give Michael written permission for the times he leaves the provider's home. They will also sign a contract which makes clear the responsibilities of providers, parents, and children.

In the contract the provider agrees to be at home during hours when children are in care, to keep activities schedules for each child, to follow accepted procedures for emergencies, and to let children leave at the end of the day only with authorized persons. Parents agree to be responsible for their children when they are not in the provider's home. They define the degree of freedom they give their child, and they schedule all outside activities, arrange transportation if the program is not able to provide it, and make sure their children are attending activities. They are also responsible for letting providers know when they are going to be late, and they must come immediately if children are ill or can't be located.

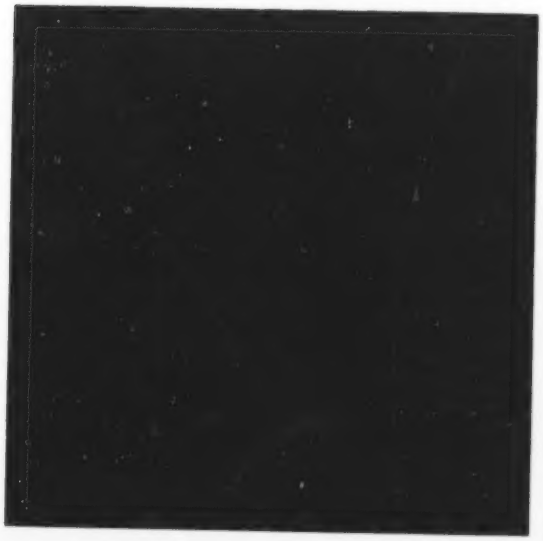
Although children do not sign the contract, they agree to follow the guidelines established by their parents. They call providers when they spend time in their homes, and let them know whenever they leave home. If their parents don't come home on time, they return to the provider's until their parents arrive to pick them up.

Mrs. Marshall gives the Greens a written copy of the Check-in Program's policies on the times care is provided, fees and billings, illness and medical records, and how parents can meet and talk with her and the provider. She answers any questions they have.

Mrs. Marshall then decides that Mrs. Cook would be a good provider for Michael. Mrs. Cook lives five blocks away from the Greens' home, has a ten year old son, and already cares for eleven year old twin girls and a boy who is twelve. Mrs. Marshall arranges to visit Mrs. Cook's home with the Greens, so they can talk with her, see what her home is like, meet the other children, and observe an afternoon in action.

HOW THE CHECK-IN PROGRAM WORKS

- Parents call the sponsoring agency to learn about the program.
- Program Coordinator interviews children and parents, explaining the contract and program policies. Parents receive a written copy of the contract and all policies and guidelines.
- Parents, children, and the Coordinator visit the proposed provider's home to meet her and see the home environment.
- If parents, children, and provider all agree they want the child to be in this provider's home, a contract session is scheduled.
- The Coordinator, the provider, parents and children decide how much freedom children will have and what activities they will participate in away from the provider's home. All parties sign the contract and care begins.



ONCE THE PROGRAM BEGINS CHILDREN:

- Check-in with the provider after school for a snack.
- Play in the provider's home or yard, do craft projects, homework, talk to other children, etc.
- Check out of provider's home as their parents agree to play with friends in the neighborhood, attend school or community activities, spend time in their own homes, etc.
- Call providers at designated times from their own homes; providers call back a few minutes later to make sure they are there.

When the Greens arrive at Mrs. Cook's, the boys are tossing a football in the front yard. Inside, one twin is doing homework at the kitchen table, near shelves stacked with games and art supplies. The other is talking to Mrs. Cook about the kind of haircut she should get.

The Greens talk with Mrs. Cook about the neighborhood, about the activities she plans for children, and about how long she has been a provider. Mrs. Cook asks Michael about his friends, what he likes to do in school, and what he likes to eat. One of the boys comes in to say he's going to walk his dog, and he will be back in half an hour. Mrs. Cook's son invites Michael to join him at football, and they play outside for awhile.

The visit to the provider's home gives the Greens an idea of the way Michael will spend his afternoons there, and they all like Mrs. Cook, who seems warm and caring. The next day they call Mrs. Marshall to let her know they want Mrs. Cook as Michael's provider. Mrs. Cook has also told Mrs. Marshall that she would like Michael to join her group. If either the Greens or Mrs. Cook had not felt comfortable with the arrangement, Mrs. Marshall would have suggested another provider for Michael.

Once everyone has agreed on the provider, the Greens meet again with Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Cook to plan Michael's weekly schedule. Although Michael does not sign the contract, and needs written permission from his parents for all outside activities, he's an active participant in the discussion, letting the adults know what he wants to do and how much independence he feels he can handle. Together, they decide he will walk to Mrs. Cook's house every day after school, except on Tuesdays, when he'll arrive after band practice. Michael says he'd like to ride his bicycle sometimes, and the Greens agree he can go as far as a major highway, and they'll also allow him to join his friends at a nearby playground. On Wednesdays and Fridays he'll spend the hour before his mother arrives in his own home, and she'll call Mrs. Cook as soon as she gets in to let her know she's with Michael.

The Greens can reevaluate the amount of freedom Michael has at any time, and they can give or withdraw permission for different activities. In the spring they'll change Michael's schedule to include baseball practice after school, and they will give him permission to leave for swimming at a community pool when the weather is warm enough.

Finally, Mr. and Mrs. Green, Mrs. Cook, and Mrs. Marshall on behalf of the child care center all sign the contract enrolling Michael and acknowledging their various responsibilities. The Check-in Program for Michael is ready to begin.

The Contract

The child care contract serves as the Family Day Care Check-in Program's agreement between parents, providers, and the sponsoring agency. It is central to all aspects of the Check-in Program, since it defines the roles and responsibilities of parents and providers. It is the basis of resolving licensing and liability issues, a key component of interviews with parents and providers, and a guide to the standards by which the program must be continually evaluated.

The contract makes clear that parents are responsible for their children when they are not in the provider's home. Parents define the limits of freedom, schedule all outside activities, arrange transportation if the program is not able to provide it, and check to see if their children are attending scheduled activities.

In addition to the contract, parents should receive a written copy of program policies detailing procedures for billing and fees, times of care and holidays, illness and medical records, and formal meetings or conversations between the parents and providers or the sponsoring agency. Parents must also sign an emergency medical authorization, and an authorization for people who may pick up their children at the provider's home.

CHILD CARE CONTRACT

I understand that this contract for child care services through the Family Day Care Check-in Program is conditioned on the compliance of me and my child with the policies and guidelines of the program. My signature on this document indicates the following:

- I am enrolling my child in the Family Day Care Check-in Program.
- I agree to provide the Program, in writing, all of the necessary information and authorization for activities I approve for my child.
- I agree to inform the Program and the provider of any special needs my child may develop.
- I have read and agree to comply with Program policies and procedures, and I understand the responsibilities for parents and providers listed below.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Through written permission, parents are responsible for defining the degree of freedom they choose to give their children. This includes after school activities, community activities, and their going to home.
2. Parents take responsibility for their children and their behaviors when they are not with their providers.
3. Whenever children take part in after school or community activities, parents are responsible for the following:
   a. Scheduling activities.
   b. Arranging transportation to and from activities if the program is not able to.
   c. Furnishing providers with updated schedules of after-school and community activities. This information must be supplied in writing or by phone and must include arrival and departure times, transportation arrangements, and days when activities are scheduled.
   d. Notifying activity supervisors and providers when children are not going to attend scheduled after-school activities.
   e. Checking with activity supervisors to ensure that children are attending activities as scheduled.
4. Parents and children agree that whenever children are spending time in their own homes, the procedures below are followed:
   a. Children call providers at designated times.
   b. Children call providers whenever they leave their homes.
   c. Whenever children are home at the end of the day, and parents have not arrived by designated times, children go to family day care homes.
5. When they are going to be late, parents are responsible for calling providers.
6. As soon as they arrive home, parents are responsible for calling providers.
7. When children are ill or when children cannot be located, parents are responsible for coming immediately.

Provider Responsibilities

1. Providers are present in their homes during those hours when family day care check-in children are under their care and supervision.
2. Providers maintain daily schedules of approved activities and routines for each child in care.
3. After children have arrived home and called providers, providers make and record times of corroborative calls.
4. When there are emergency situations, providers do the following:
   a. Make immediate calls to the 911 emergency number or other appropriate emergency numbers.
   b. Call system administrative staff who, when necessary, go to the site of emergency.
   c. Call parents.
5. Providers call parents whenever children are unable to remain in a group care situation.
6. When children fail to arrive at provider homes, and when they fail to make check-in calls or answer corroborative calls, the procedures below are followed:
   a. Providers call childrens' homes and homes of known friends.
   b. Providers call childrens' schools and, whenever possible, community activity sites.
   c. Providers notify parents and the system Coordinator, and parents come immediately to continue efforts to locate their children.

7. Providers release children only to persons authorized by parents on child care agreements.

By my signature below, I further agree that the provider and the Family Day Care Check-In Program are released from all claims or liabilities for damages or injuries caused to or by my child. I agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Family Day Care Check-in Program and provider from any costs, or claims arising out of the provider's care of my child. I am also indicating my understanding that my failure to comply with the Check-in policies and guidelines will result in termination of this agreement.

The Family Day Care Check-in Program agrees to provide child care for_____ . Care will begin on _____ and end on _____
Month/Date/Year Month/Date/Year

under the terms and conditions stated in this agreement. I agree to pay the sum of $ _____

according to the following payment schedule: _____

_____

Other terms or conditions: _____

_____

_____

Signatures:

_____ _____
Parent **Date** **Parent** **Date**

_____ _____
System Representative **Date** **Provider** **Date**

EMERGENCY MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION

It is understood that this agreement covers only those situations which are true emergencies and only when I cannot be reached. Otherwise I expect to be notified immediately. I authorize _____ _____ to obtain immediate medical care and I consent to the hospitalization of, the performance of necessary diagnostic tests upon, the use of surgery on, and/or the administration of drugs to my child _____ if an emergency occurs when I cannot be located immediately. I understand that I am responsible for payment of medical expenses.

Medical treatment costs are covered by:
Blue Cross - Blue Shield Policy No. _____

Medicaid Coverage No. _____

Other Medical Insurance _____

Name of Insurance Co. _____

Policy No. _____

Child's Physician/Clinic _____

Address _____ Phone _____

_____

Persons who are authorized to pick up my child:

1. Name _____ Relationship _____
   Address _____ Phone _____
2. Name _____ Relationship _____
   Address _____ Phone _____
3. Name _____ Relationship _____
   Address _____ Phone _____

STARTING A CHECK-IN PROGRAM: THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT WORK

The Family Day Care Check-In Program is a partnership between administrative staff based at the sponsoring agency's office, and family day care providers based in their homes. The sponsoring agency chooses a Program Coordinator to run the program; the providers care for children day to day. They both share responsibilities for planning programs and activities, keeping records, and building an ongoing relationship with parents, and they also share an understanding of the needs and problems of children, and a commitment to their care.

The Coordinator

The Coordinator plans, organizes, and supervises all aspects of the Check-In Program. She may already work for the sponsoring agency; she may be hired to do this job. A coordinator might be a former teacher, an administrator of another day care program, a long-time program leader with Scouts or the Y. She has a background of working with children, and she likes them. She may have some experience with management and organization, planning programs, putting out a newsletter, and drawing together resources for families. She should feel comfortable supervising and evaluating the providers.

The Coordinator spends some time at the sponsoring agency's offices and some time on the road. She is the one to interview and hire providers and other administrative staff if it is needed, and to interview families and refer children to providers' homes. She plans program policies, the budget, and training programs for providers. She refers children and families to health and social services, and puts out a newsletter for parents and providers.

She also visits each provider's home every month to see how the program is going, to talk to the children about what they are doing and to the provider about her work and plans. She might arrive with a box full of sequins, glitter, and feathers to decorate Halloween masks; she might bring an idea for a game. She will publicize the program by visiting school principals, sending updated brochures to community groups and professionals who work with children, and speaking about preadolescents to a PTA.

In some cases the Coordinator will be responsible for other programs of the sponsoring agency. She might run the Check-In Program in conjunction with a family day care program for younger children, or organize recreational or educational programs that Check-in children, as well as other children, can attend. The Virginia pilot program Coordinators organized activities which included French and Vietnamese cooking classes, karate demonstrations, and field trips to museums and concerts for their Check-in children.

The Coordinator is also there to talk to parents and providers. This can be as formal as a scheduled conference with parents to discuss a child's learning problems, or as informal as a telephone call from a provider at the end of a difficult day. The Coordinator provides support for all the participants in the program.

As the program expands, the Coordinator may need to hire an assistant or other administrative staff to help with recordkeeping, training, or supervising providers. In the experience of Virginia programs, a Coordinator can not supervise more than 25 family day care homes without requiring additional staff.

The Family Day Care Provider

The provider is the mainstay of the Check-in Program. She is much more than a babysitter—she is a professional giving care in a safe, stimulating, nurturing environment and helping children to grow in responsibility and independence. She is dependable, patient, and resourceful in handling emergencies, able to speak candidly to parents without intruding, able to listen to and understand children. She enjoys being with children, and that is usually at the heart of why she wants to be a provider.

One of the biggest misconceptions about child care is that a provider is a person who can't do anything else. In fact, a provider most likely has had a career. She might be a teacher, business person, an artist—most often she is a woman who has decided she wants to be home with her own children, and would like a job which allows her to work at home. Sometimes her children are young; sometimes they are also preadolescents, and the Check-in children become friends or companions for them.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO ASK PROVIDER APPLICANTS

- As a provider, you will be caring for other children in your home. Have you considered the effect on your own children?
- How does your spouse feel about your becoming a provider?
- What do you think is the most important aspect of the provider's relationship with preadolescents?
- How much freedom do you feel is appropriate for preadolescents?
- What kind of discipline do you think is appropriate for preadolescents?
- What snack would you prepare for five family day care children, and where in your home would you serve them?

HYPOTHETICAL SITUATIONS TO ASK PROVIDER APPLICANTS

- You are caring for three children, ages 10-12. Where could the children go on their bikes? What instructions would you give them?
- A ten year old boy is skipping soccer practice to go to the electronic game arcade. How would you handle this situation?
- A thirteen year old in your care has just begun her first menstrual period, is crying, and says she is frightened. How would you handle this situation?
- A ten year old complains of abdominal pain, nausea, and is hot to the touch. What would you do?
- A twelve year old fell down the steps, is limping, and has a swollen foot. What would you do?
- A fourteen year old calls and says there is a grease fire in the kitchen and the house is beginning to fill with smoke. What would you do?
- You find a thirteen year old smoking in the garage. What would you do?

The provider's main responsibility is to care for children. She serves them a snack when they arrive at her home, and listens to problems and shares their happy experiences. She might ask one child about his upcoming math test, hear about a movie or a bicycle that broke. On some days she will invite children to do a crafts project or learn a new game. They might carve pumpkins before Halloween, make Christmas or Valentine's Day cards. In one Virginia program, each provider and her children are compiling a cook book of recipes they try, and a memory book of anecdotes about the holidays. Sometimes a provider takes everyone swimming or skating, or to one of the other programs offered by the sponsoring agency.

Children are not always with their provider. However, even when they are out with friends, involved in a community activity, or in their own homes, their provider is available and accessible. When children call in from their own homes, the provider calls them back to make sure that they are there. If there is an emergency, she responds, follows program procedures, and notifies parents.

The provider also helps and counsels parents. She might reassure parents who are uncomfortable about giving their children freedom to do things on their own, and discuss with them the appropriate amount of independence and responsibility for each child. She answers a variety of questions about counseling, employment, emergency services and other things that families need to know. She lets parents know about the activities in the family day care home and how children spend their time, and she establishes telephone hours on specific nights at specific times so that parents know when she is available to talk.

In addition, a provider keeps records for all children, including their contracts, medical forms, attendance, and activity schedules, and she arranges for substitute care when necessary.

Selecting a provider should be an orderly procedure which keeps in mind these varied responsibilities and the warmth and energy required to do the job. An applicant should be interviewed by the Coordinator in the office, and visited in her home so that the Coordinator can see both the physical environment and, if possible, how the applicant acts with children. In Virginia an applicant is asked to sign releases allowing a program to obtain a Child Protective Service clearance through the State Child Protective Service register.

Interviews should explore how the applicant feels about children and how she would act in different situations. The Coordinator might ask, for example, how much freedom the applicant feels is appropriate for preadolescents, or what she would do if she discovered that a ten year old in her care was skipping soccer practice to go to a game arcade.

The Coordinator is looking for a person who is warm, caring, energetic, and sensible, and a home which is cheerful, well organized, and safe. As one Virginia coordinator put it, she picks a provider when she can answer yes to this question: Would I want my own child to be with this person in this home every day?

HOME EVALUATION

Name _____

Evaluated by _____ Date _____

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. Is there a part of your home that would be off limits to family day care children?

   _____

2. Are there weapons in the house? _____ Yes/No

   Where are they stored? _____

   Where is the ammunition stored? _____

3. Do you, or does anyone in the home, smoke? _____ Yes/No

4. Do you have pets? _____

   Proof of immunization _____ Yes/No

Providers must meet all family day care system standards listed below. The ratings "1" through "5" indicate the following:

1. Provider/home does not meet standard. Substantial improvement is needed.
2. Provider/home does not meet standard. Improvements needed are obvious.
3. Provider/home meets standard but could use work in this area.
4. Provider/home meets standard.
5. Provider/home is exceptionally strong in this area.

To be accepted as a family day care check-in provider, a provider and her home must receive ratings of "3" or higher in each area.

INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN	1	2	3	4	5
1. Listens to children and asks questions					
2. Makes direct eye contact when speaking with children					
3. Speaks to children in a quiet voice					
4. When disciplining children speaks in a clear, firm manner. Does not yell or threaten					
5. Balances interaction with leaving children alone					
6. Responds to individual needs of each child					
7. Allows freedom appropriate for preadolescent children					
8. Meets children's need before own					
9. Shows evidence of organizational ability					
10. Is prepared for emergencies					

		1	2	3	4	5
11.	Is relaxed					
12.	Has positive affect: no evidence of anger/depression					
13.	Dresses appropriately for work with children					

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1.	House is structurally sound					
2.	Smoke detectors are present and properly placed					
3.	Electrical outlets are not over-loaded and are in good repair					
4.	House has adequate heating/cooling					
5.	Open windows are screened					
6.	House has adequate lighting					
7.	Kitchen appliances are working					
8.	Kitchen has fire extinguisher					
9.	House has public water					
10.	Bathroom and kitchen have hot and cold running water					
11.	Bathroom has working toilet					
12.	Bathroom has soap, towels & toilet paper					
13.	Dangerous materials are stored out of children's reach					
14.	Space is clean and free from dangerous obstructions					
15.	Indoor and outdoor play areas are adequate in size and free from safety hazards					
16.	Garbage is stored properly indoors and outdoors					

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

1.	Has space for children's privacy					
2.	Has space for children's belongings					
3.	Has adequate space for food service					
4.	Has space for isolation of sick children					
5.	Has appropriate games/equipment for preadolescent children					

COMMENTS: _____

_____

DISPOSITION: _____

_____

FIRE EVACUATION PLAN: _____

_____

SPACE INSPECTION

Date _____

Provider _____ Evaluator _____

Instructions: Place a check next to any item that is below standard. Give one copy to the provider with written comments on any deficiency.

When a provider does not have public access to [illegible] this form can be used for [illegible] term homes, have the provider [illegible]

[illegible]

_____ Toilet .....

_____ Toilet .....

_____ Soap, towels & toilet paper .....

YARD/PLAY AREA

_____ Space .....

_____ Obstructions .....

_____ Hazards .....

RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

_____

_____

FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION DATE: _____

THE BUSINESS OF CHILD CARE: MEETING REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITIES

Whether they take in one or dozens of children, whether they are based in a center or family home, the agency and its providers are running a *business*. They are subject to codes and regulations of government bodies, and liable to lawsuits in case of accident or injury.

Since regulations and legal requirements vary from state to state, and community to community, each sponsoring agency planning a Family Day Care Check-in Program must become familiar with the specific requirements under which it will operate. There are, however, general areas of importance for every group to consider, and guidelines to help any program best protect itself under the law.

Many of the state laws applicable to family day care are not well developed or specific, and many of the local regulations and requirements were written with pre-school children in mind. The sponsoring agency planning a Check-in Program needs to clarify for each regulatory group the unique features of the program, as well as the special needs of preadolescents, which may not be covered by existing regulations. In addition, the sponsoring agency needs to clearly define program policies and responsibilities of all participants to minimize the risk of liability.

Licensing

Family day care programs are typically licensed, where licensing is required, to provide direct care and supervision in family day care homes. In the Check-in Program, however, children will sometimes be on their own, away from the provider's home.

The Virginia Department of Social Services, Licensing Division, resolved the question of licensing for the Family Day Care Check-in pilot programs by ruling that licenses are extended for direct care and supervision provided in family day care homes. As with other day care programs, parents can give permission for their children to leave the day care home to participate in other activities. Parents take responsibility for their children at these times.

Zoning

Local governments often place zoning restrictions on the number of children who can be in a provider home. In Fairfax County, Virginia, for example, up to five children are allowed in a family day care home at one time. If a provider wants to care for more than five children at one time, she must get a special permit.

Although no providers in the pilot programs chose to take more than five children, some providers may need to accept more to make their involvement in the program economically feasible. Applying for a special zoning permit, however, is a cumbersome and time-consuming process. Fairfax County resolved the zoning question by ruling that up to nine children might be enrolled with each provider, but no more than five children could be in the provider's home at any one time on a regular basis. Since some children will be at the provider's house while others are at soccer practice,or playing with other friends, this requirement can be met, and the program can operate without a special zoning permit.

Even when a special permit is not required, providers may still need to request and receive approval from the local zoning authority. In some cases this may be done by the sponsoring agency, but often each provider must obtain individual approval.

Liability

Although there are only a small number of litigated cases concerning provider liability, legal research shows there is a trend to impose responsibility for a "reasonable standard of care" on anyone who supervises children. The definition of "reasonable standard of care," however, is open to interpretation. In general, it includes the rules and standards set by the

RESOLVING LEGAL & REGULATORY ISSUES

1. Apply for licenses based on care provided in the family day care home.
2. Apply for zoning permit based on the maximum number of children who will be in the provider's house at any one time.
3. Use a contract between the sponsoring agency, providers, and parents to define all participants' rights and responsibilities.
4. Continually supervise program to ensure that all rules are being followed, and document any failures and corrective action.
5. Carry liability insurance.

sponsoring agency, the codes and regulations for safety and operation set by state and local agencies, and the standards assumed by the community.

The Check-In Care Program's standard of care is embodied in the child care contract, which clearly and specifically defines the rights and responsibilities of the sponsoring agency, providers, and parents.

The contract should make clear not only what the Check-in Program is providing, but what it is not providing, thus explicitly shifting certain responsibilities to parents. By signing the contract, parents agree that they understand the program is not accountable for these aspects. In particular, parents are responsible for the degree of freedom they choose to give their children, for supplying the provider with all pertinent information, and for their children's arrangements when they are not in the provider's home.

The contract will also help the Check-in Program enforce its rules and policies, since parents have acknowledged they agree to them. The contract should include the general and specific rules of the program, including hours of operation and payment, and the method of resolving problems when one participant fails to meet his responsibilities.

The contract can be so specific that it includes individual provisions for each child, including directions on administering medicine, alternate persons who may pick up the child, and any exceptions to the rules governing the program. While many of the provisions in the contract may be implicitly understood, an explicit statement will help the Check-in Program more exactly define its standard of reasonable care and responsibility.

If an accident or injury does occur, liability will more likely depend on the provider's failure to do what a situation required, either through common sense, or because the program's rules and regulations were not followed. The provider and sponsoring agency might also be liable if they did not adequately prepare for obvious situations with appropriate rules or supervision.

In addition to the contract therefore, the Check-in Program can protect itself by insuring that the program always operates as it was designed, following all rules and regulations. When situations arise for which there are not rules, new rules must be formulated. The sponsoring agency should document its continuing efforts to supervise and evaluate the program, as well as all program failures and the actions taken to correct them.

Finally, the Family Day Care Check-in Program should carry liability insurance for all program staff, principals of the sponsoring agency and providers, and for all vehicles used by the program. One Virginia pilot program carried day care liability insurance which cost about $100 per year per provider. The other program carried a rider on its regular liability insurance which covers its family day care providers, at about the same cost.

REACHING PARENTS AND PROVIDERS

- Distribute brochures, fliers, announcements, posters to everyone on the sponsoring agency's mailing list and to schools and PTA's, pre-schools and day care centers, churches, youth clubs, pediatricians' and dentists' offices, real estate companies, and area merchants.
- Send press releases and/or public service announcements to newspapers, radio and TV stations. Place paid ads in newspapers.
- Hold "family information" meetings on the problems and needs of preadolescents and how the program serves them. Offer speakers on these subjects to other community groups.

RECRUITING PARENTS AND PROVIDERS

Once the sponsoring agency has decided to implement a Family Day Care Check-in Program, the community needs to know about it. Information about the program should reach parents who might use it, potential providers, and any person or group who works with preadolescents.

The sponsoring agency can begin its publicity efforts by using the contacts it already has in the community with parents, other service groups and professionals, and the media. Informal, personal, one-to-one contacts with people who know about and trust the group are an excellent way to start.

The sponsoring agency can use a network which already exists. The Coordinator might visit the principals of elementary and intermediate schools to let them know about the program, and also talk with the school secretaries and leave them brochures or fact sheets. She can call on ministers and the directors of other programs or clubs for children, and call or write to a reporter who has covered other programs of the sponsoring agency before. She might telephone people who have worked for the sponsoring agency as volunteers or in paid positions, to see if they would like to be providers.

Communicating the Message

In addition to using personal contacts, the sponsoring agency can distribute written information in many forms throughout the community. Before beginning the overall publicity campaign, and each time it plans a specific publicity project, the sponsoring agency should consider five points:

- **The purpose of the publicity**
  - -To recruit providers?
  - -To explain the program to parents?
  - -To inform the community about the needs and problems of unsupervised preadolescents?

- **The audience for the publicity**
  - -Parents?
  - -Community leaders?
  - -Potential providers?
  - -Professionals?
  - -Schools?

- **Why this audience needs the program**
  - -To care for their children in a convenient, appropriate way?
  - -To improve opportunities for preadolescents?
  - -To have an interesting job at home?

- **Information that clarifies or supports the benefits of using the program**
  - -Favorable comparison with alternatives?
  - -Quotes from educators?
  - -Discussion of advantages of the contract?

- **The image the program should present**
  - -Businesslike, emphasizing the experience and organization of the sponsoring agency?
  - -Homey, emphasizing the warmth of the provider and the neighborhood settings?
  - -Convenient, emphasizing the flexibility and proximity to home and school?

Saying It Straight

All written publicity should be clear and direct in language, simple in format, and printed in dark ink on light paper. Text should state the key points and benefits of the program quickly and concisely. Posters or radio and television announcements should concentrate on one idea and essential program information, with directions on how to find out more about the program.

Mailed materials, or materials given to groups to distribute, should include a cover letter explaining why the information is of interest to the particular individual or group.

All written materials to recruit both parents and providers can draw from the same basic text covering the highlights of the program. Following are examples of a text which could serve as a press release, flier, newsletter item, or the basis of a brochure, and a cover letter to accompany brochures, posters, and announcements.

SAMPLE

Press Release, Flier, Announcement

It's 3:00 *p.m.* Do you know how your kids are?

More and more working parents must ask themselves this question when the school bell dismisses their children. An estimated seven million "latchkey kids" are on their own before and after school and during holidays and vacations. Children aged 10-14 feel too old for traditional day care, yet often their parents are unable to find an alternative. Instead, many preadolescents spend their afternoons alone in locked houses, or hanging out in shopping malls or on the street without much purpose.

Now there is an alternative: The Family Day Care Check-in Program. The (sponsoring agency) is offering this program to serve the needs of these children and their parents for convenient, affordable, appropriate care.

The Check-in Program provides flexible supervision by caring, trained adults, while giving children the opportunity to increase responsibility by planning and participating in activities on their own. After school, children check-in with a neighborhood family day care provider, who offers them a snack and a chance to talk about their day. With parents' permission, they are also free to spend time in their own homes, play with friends, and participate in school and community activities. Individual schedules are set by children, parents, and providers together, and the program considers the special needs and interests of each child. For more information on the program contact: (Name, address, phone number.)

SAMPLE

Cover Letter

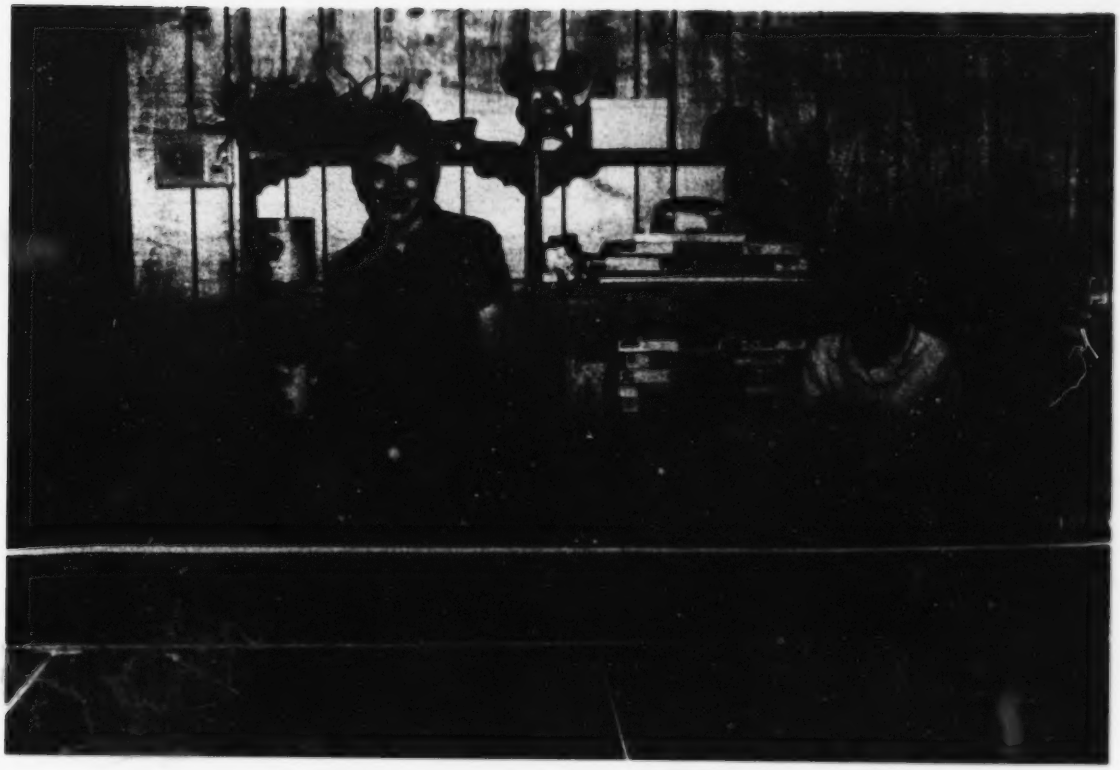
Begin with an opening appropriate to the group, e.g.:

For doctors and dentists: "Like many professionals you are probably dealing with working parents who need...."
For schools and youth clubs: "Your school/club serves the children of working parents who need...."
For adult clubs: "Your club probably includes working parents who need...."

Follow with this basic text:

....working parents who need convenient, affordable, after school care for their preadolescent children. Please make the enclosed brochures (or fliers or announcements) available to the families you serve. These brochures (or fliers or announcements) describe the Family Day Care Check-In Program and the importance of after school guidance and supervision for preadolescent children.

For more information on the Family Day Care Check-in Program, or to obtain additional brochures (or fliers or announcements), please call or write.



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PROVIDER TRAINING: DEVELOPING SKILLS AND SHARING EXPERIENCES

Family day care providers who work at home need opportunities to develop skills and to build support groups. The training course outlined in this chapter will help providers strengthen skills to meet the special needs of preadolescents and to build relationships with working parents. Training also brings providers together to share common day care experiences and pool resources.

The Process of Training

During the course, the instructor encourages providers to participate actively, explore their thoughts, share ideas, and bring their own materials to classes. The learning environment is informal and receptive. The process helps providers consider their feelings about child care as a job, about themselves and their self worth, and about their own childhood experiences, which may affect the way they care for and supervise children.

The instructor uses a variety of training methods, including:

- Large group discussions
- Small group discussions and exercises
- Written materials
- Films and guest lecturers
- Modelling
- Problem solving

The instructor participates enthusiastically in any exercises and discussions. She should use the suggestions in this chapter as a starting point, bringing her own ideas, pertinent information,and experiences to enrich the teaching of each topic.

Topics for Training

Session 1. Program Orientation

Providers need an opportunity to talk about their jobs, both what they think the work involves and why they are doing it. They should also understand their special role and responsibilities within the Check-in Program, as well as all the policies and procedures that guide them in their work and in their relationship with the sponsoring agency. This session helps providers become familiar with the details of the contract and other agency programs so they can provide Check-in Program families with any information they might need.

Points for discussion might include:

- Personnel policies
- Parent and provider responsibilities detailed in the contract
- Planning and following children's individual weekly schedules
- Administrative responsibilities, including recordkeeping and arranging for substitute care

Session 2. The Business of Family Day Care

Providers are involved in a business which requires organization and accurate recordkeeping, and they are subject to laws, regulations, and standards. They need to be knowledgable about all aspects of their business and legal responsibilities before they can begin to care for children.

Points for discussion might include:

- Federal and state tax policies and procedures for those who do business in their homes
- Insurance options
- Liability issues, with an emphasis on maintaining standards
- Applicable licensing and zoning requirements

RESOURCES

Business Ideas for Family Day Care Providers: Basic Guide to Record Keeping and Taxes
Toys 'n Things Press
906 N. Dole Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 55103

Family Day Care As A Business - Family Day Care Exchange
Publications Distribution
Printing and Publications Bldg.
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011

Family Day Care Resource Packet
The Children's Foundation
815 Fifteenth Street, N.W.
Suite 928
Washington, D.C. 20005

TRAINING METHODS: MODELLING

Modelling is a technique which tries to create for providers in the classroom what the program wants them to create for children in their homes. The instructor and classroom serves as a model for the following:

- A relaxed learning environment
- Good planning and organization
- Active listening
- Acceptance of everyone's feelings and ideas.

TRAINING METHODS: PROBLEM SOLVING

Providers are encouraged to work with others through mutual problem solving, rather than reacting with anger, frustration, or hopelessness. They are encouraged to use the following steps for problem solving whether they are involved in class exercises, day care related problems with parents, or discipline situations with children.

- Identify the problem
- Brainstorm possible solutions, accepting all ideas no matter how impractical they seem
- Agree on a solution
- Put the solution into action
- Evaluate the solution several hours/days later, and if it isn't working, repeat the process

Session 3. Preadolescent Growth and Development

Preadolescents are in a transition period between childhood and adulthood. Providers who understand the social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development of preadolescents can be more sensitive to the concerns of the children in their care. It will be easier for them to build satisfying relationships with children if they can see the reasons behind behavior and moods. This session also gives providers the opportunity to think about their own adolescence so that they can apply their feelings and observations to the situations they will encounter with children in the Check-in Program.

Points for discussion might include:

- Social development - peer influence, societal pressures, the need for varied activities
- Emotional development - self definition and the need for acceptance
- Intellectual development - increased imagination, flexibility, precision of thought
- Physical development - hormonal changes, growth spurts, menstruation, male puberty
- Supervision - how do parents, providers, and preadolescents decide the level and degree of adult supervision required

Session 4. Discipline

Both adults and children bring their own feelings and past experiences to a discipline situation. Providers need to understand how their own childhood and adolescent experiences influence their attitudes in discipline situations and what their own expectations for behavior are. Thinking about the different values and experiences will help providers respond effectively to each discipline situation.

Points for discussion might include:

- Impact of adult behavior on discipline situations
- Role of child's experiences and values in discipline situations
- Ways to avoid discipline problems, including showing respect and trust for children, positive approach, avoiding physical and verbal abuse, allowing children to express feelings, setting limits, and understanding the individual child
- Ways to cope with conflict, including avoiding power struggles and making clear why the adult wants something done

RESOURCES:

Parent Effectiveness Training
P.E.T. by Thomas Gordon
New American Library
Nature of the Child
by Jerome Kagan
Basic Books
Taming the Tornado in Your Classroom and at Home by Alan Lifson Educational Consultant Group Publications
729 West 16th Street, Suite B-3
Costa Mera, California 92627
Please Don't Sit on the Kids
by Claire Cherry

Session 5. Health Care

Although most preadolescents are in good health, there are certain health problems common to their age. Providers who are aware of the general physical and mental health of the children in their care can be sensitive to early signs of poor health, illness, substance abuse, or depression. They can also help children adjust to the physical changes in their bodies and offer encouragement and approval to build children's self esteem.

Points for discussion might include:

- Assessing children's general health - energy level, hygiene, sight and hearing, intellectual capacity
- Common problems - acne, awkwardness
- Mental health - self esteem and self concept
- Adolescent health problems - substance abuse, eating disorders
- Suicide, including procedures for reporting concerns to parents and the sponsoring agency

Session 6. First Aid

No matter how safe a home is children will sometimes have accidents or unexpected health problems. Providers need to learn basic first aid procedures so that they can handle medical emergencies. If they know beforehand what to do, they can respond quickly to situations involving shock, bleeding, poisoning, broken bones, burns, and animal bites. They should also be familiar with rescue procedures and water safety. Local chapters of the American Red Cross will provide courses on basic first aid for providers. Providers should receive

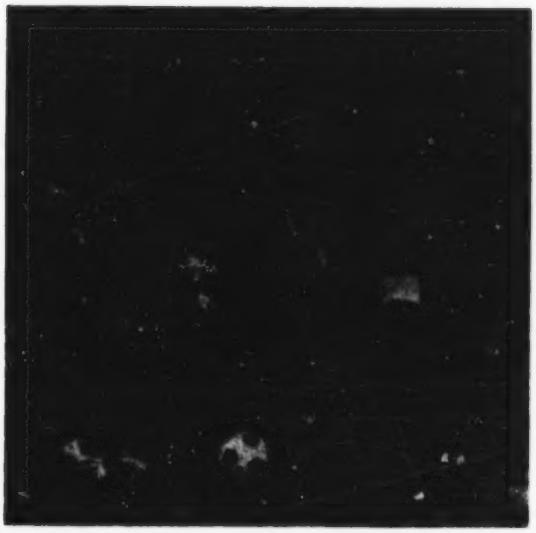
Red Cross certification either through this training program, local Red Cross chapters, or other certified institutions.

Points for discussion might include:
- First aid procedures for common emergencies
- Practice in bandaging, splints, rescue, CPR
- Medical supplies to keep on hand

RESOURCES

Sick Child Care for Parents and Child Care Providers
Bananas Child Care Information and Referral
6501 Telegraph
Oakland, California 94609

Standards for Child Health Care,
Third Edition
American Academy of Pediatrics, Evanston, Illinois



Session 7. Fire Safety

Fires in the home are usually the result of unsafe habits or equipment, including faulty fireplaces, heating and electrical systems, cooking accidents, and smoking. Providers need to be aware of fire hazards in their homes and the measures they can take for fire prevention.

Points for discussion might include:
- Smoking, cooking, heating and wiring safety
- Housekeeping to avoid fires
- Storing flammable liquids
- Smoke detectors
- Formulating fire evacuation plans for each home.

RESOURCES

Health and Safety - Family Day Care Exchange
Publications Distribution
Printing and Publications Building
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011

Session 8. Nutrition

Preadolescents need good eating habits for health and growth. Providers who understand the basic food groups and the balanced diet children require can help the children in their care develop healthy eating habits. They can plan their snacks as good models for children, encourage them to avoid junk food, and involve them in cooking as an enjoyable activity.

Points for discussion might include:
- The four basic food groups
- Shopping for and planning healthy snacks
- Fostering good eating habits, including showing confidence in children's judgment about what they want to eat.

RESOURCES

Meals and Snacks Family Day Care Exchange
Publications Distribution
Printing and Publications Building
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011

Session 9. Child Neglect, Abuse and Protection

Situations involving suspected child neglect or abuse require common sense and sensitivity. Providers need to be familiar with possible signs of neglect or abuse and with the Check-in Program's procedures for identifying and reporting suspected cases. Reporting is a way of reaching out to help families and not a device for meddling or unwarranted intervention. The office of the local Department of Social Services is usually responsible for receiving reports of child abuse and neglect. Contact the supervisor of the Child Protective Services unit to learn more

about your state's requirements and responsibilities of providers. Child Protective Services workers are available to discuss these issues with local groups.

Points for discussion might include:
- What is child abuse, physical and emotional?
- What is sexual abuse and molestation?
- What is child neglect, including issues of after school supervision?
- Signs of abuse and neglect
- Provider responsibilities for reporting abuse and neglect
- Procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse and neglect

RESOURCES

National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse
332 South Michigan Avenue, Room 1250
Chicago, Illinois 60604-4357

National Child Abuse Coalition
1125 15th Street, N.W.
Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20005

National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect
P.O. Box 1182
Washington, D.C. 20013

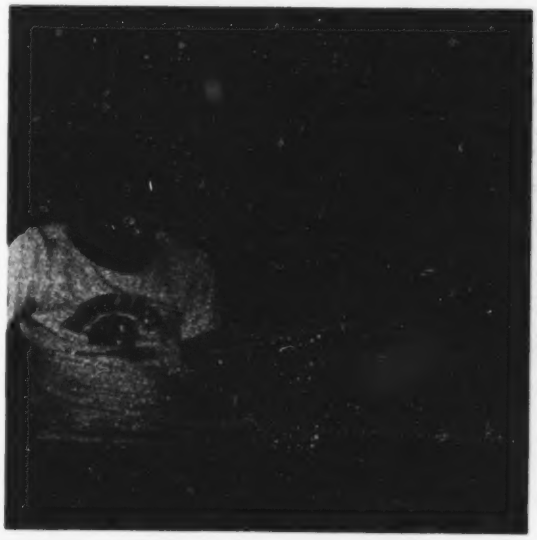
Session 10. Activities for Preadolescents

Diverse activities offer preadolescents opportunities for exploration and self-definition. Providers can help children use their imaginations and creativity and enjoy relationships with other children by planning a variety of projects and activities children can do alone and in groups. They can also help children grow in independence and explore the world by arranging field trips and letting them know about community activities they can do themselves, including sports, arts lessons, and volunteer work.

Points for discussion might include:
- Organizing the home for activities - games and equipment, attractive play areas, arts and crafts materials, storage
- Activities to do at home
- Field trips
- Community activities
- Which activities require adult supervision and why
- Importance of peer relationships in planning activities.

RESOURCES:

Amazing Days - A Kids Diary of 365 Amazing Days, by Randy Harelson, Workmans Publishing Co.
Snips and Snails and Walnut Whales, by Phyllis Fiarotta, Workmans Publishing Co.
Good Times - Every Kid's Book of Things to Do, by Marilyn Burns, Bantam Books
I Can Make a Rainbow, by Marjorie Frank, Incentive Publications
Puddles and Wings and Grapevine Swings, by Imogene Foret and Marjorie Frank, Incentive Publications
The Wild Inside, by Linda Allison, Sierra Club, Scribners.
Activities for Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere, by Jeri Robinson, Little & Brown
Never a Dull Moment, Schocken Books
Cats' Cradle, Owl's Eyes: A Book of String Games, by Camilln Gryski, Kids Can Press
The Great Perpetual Learning Machine, by Jim Blake and Barbara Ernst, Little, Brown & Co.



Session 11. Community Resources

Most communities offer a variety of cultural, recreational, and social service programs. A successful Check-in Program needs to identify local activities for preadolescents to check out to. New families in the neighborhood may not be familiar with libraries, museums, hospitals, nature centers, and other community resources. At times families in the Check-in Program will need to be referred to social service or other community agencies. Also, providers can be a guide to community services when pa-

rents need help and don't know where to turn. They should also keep an updated list of community resources to share with families in the program.

Points for discussion might include:
- Community resources, including workshops, consumer information, parks and recreation centers, children's organizations, and libraries
- Organized community volunteer activities
- Books to help with parenting, and books for preadolescents.
- Local family service agencies and the services they provide.

Session 12. Parent and Provider Relationships

Providers will be in frequent touch with parents in the program, as well as being involved in the care of their children. Providers are important to children, but they are not substitute parents. They can help children see their parents in a positive way by their comments and attitudes. They can also help parents guide their children towards independence by planning and helping them to plan appropriate activities. Providers can involve parents in their children's after school lives by asking them to save project materials, to arrange field trips to places where they work, etc. Listening to parents without judging them and always guarding a family's privacy can help providers build a relationship of trust with parents in the program.

Points for discussion might include:
- Role of parents and providers in children's lives
- Children's image of parents
- Ways to involve parents in children's after school life
- Ways to build a trusting relationship with parents

RESOURCES:

Parent-Provider Relations - Family Day Care Exchange
Publications Distribution
Printing and Publications Bldg
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011

GENERAL REFERENCES

How to Start and Operate a Day Care Home
Durham Day Care Council
107 Market Street
Durham, N. Carolina 27702

Family Day Care: A Full Time Job - A Dynamic Video-Tape Training Package
Health and Welfare Planning Association
200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Family Day to Day Care
Quality Child Care, Inc.
P.O. Box 176
5209 Eden Road
Mound, MN 55364

Child Development Series - Day Care
#4 Serving School-Age Children
#9 Family Day Care
H.E. 21.11 Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

School's Out - Now What
Joan M. Bergstrom, Ed.D
Ten Speed Press
P.O. Box 7123
Berkeley, California 94707

KEEPING THE CHECK-IN PROGRAM GOING

Together the Coordinator and providers make the Check-in Program work by following the program's policies and procedures, keeping accurate records, correcting problems as soon as they appear, and continually evaluating the care and the program.

Although the sponsoring agency may have existing employment policies which apply to the Coordinator and the providers, it may also develop policies which apply specifically to the Check-in Program. Policies should cover recruitment and hiring, leave and holidays, pay and benefits, and termination. They should also explain the procedure and criteria for evaluation.

Supervision and Evaluations

Supervision and evaluation keep the program running smoothly and limit liability. The Coordinator should visit the provider's home at least once a month and let her know how she is doing. At these times, the Coordinator can talk about strengths and weaknesses, make suggestions for activities, and discuss any changes she feels would improve care. Each year the provider also receives a written evaluation based on relationships with children and parents, her home environment, her knowledge and use of resources and materials for children, and her recordkeeping accuracy. She is also evaluated monthly and yearly on how well she is following the program's procedures.

In addition to evaluating providers, the Coordinator and the sponsoring agency should also evaluate the effectiveness of the Check-in Program itself at least once a year. They should review the basic services offered by the program, including the number and size of provider homes, and the number of children in the program. They should consider whether the needs of children, their parents, and providers are being met by the program as it operates, and note any problems and their solutions. They should think about any changes which would improve the program,whether in overall focus or specific procedures. Finally, they should evaluate the adequacy of recordkeeping and determine how well administrative staff are following established procedures.

When Problems Arise

When children have problems, or when parents don't meet their responsibilities, providers should work directly with them first to solve the problems. They should contact the Coordinator for help if they feel uncomfortable with the situation or can not solve it.

Problems will be easier to solve when everyone understands what is expected of them. The contract and written policies and procedures are a guide to all participants in the program, clarifying the standards everyone is to meet.

Recordkeeping

Both the Coordinator and the providers are involved in recordkeeping. Since the Check-in Program allows children to take responsibility for themselves and plan their own schedules, it is important to keep accurate records of children's activities so that the program, parents and providers are always aware of where children are and what they are doing. Accurate recordkeeping also helps protect the program by documenting parental permission, how problems are resolved, and the standards of care and supervision maintained by the program and provider. The following kinds of records will help the coordinator and providers organize and effectively operate the Check-In Program.

Coordinator Records:

- List of children in each provider's home with referral and starting dates
- List of provider homes each child has been referred to
- Documentation of provider training with dates
- Documentation of conferences with parents including summary of discussion and results
- List of substitute providers
- Provider records

Provider Records

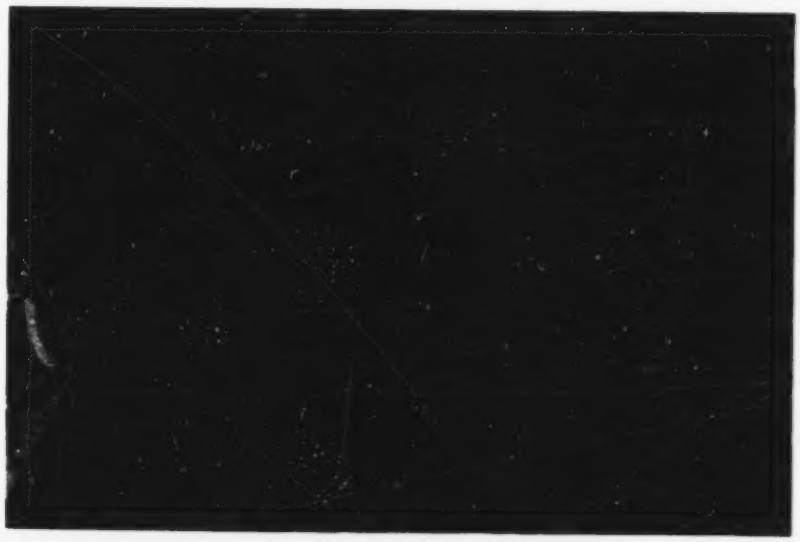
- Parent authorization to give medicines with dates and times administered
- Provider time sheet including overtime if parents are late
- List of weekly snacks and activities in the provider's home
- Children's attendance records
- Activity schedule for each child including notes on corroborative calls including dates and times
- Parental permission for activities outside the provider's home.

READY TO BEGIN

The policies, procedures, and responsibilities are clear. Coordinator and providers are hired. Publicity is out, licenses and zoning cleared, liability understood. Children are enrolled, contracts are signed, activity schedules are set.

The Family Day Care Check-in Program is about to begin.

The guidelines in this booklet should help the sponsoring agency understand, implement, and run a Check-in Program. Thanks to the efforts of the sponsoring agency, the program can be a practical neighborhood based alternative for after-school care in the community, helping "latchkey kids" year after year to unlock the door to their own growth into responsible, independent young adults.



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